

National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee
(NNICC)

The NNICC Report **1987**

The Supply of Illicit Drugs
to the United States

April 1988

Developments in Source Countries - Southwest Asia

Opium Production: Southwest Asia continued to be one of three reservoirs of opium in the world. In 1987, between 735 and 1,360 metric tons of opium were produced in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan (see Figure 17). Much of the opium was consumed in those countries, but a large quantity was refined into heroin for illicit use worldwide.

Figure 17

Opium Production -- Southwest Asia, 1984-1987
(metric tons)

	1984	1985	1986	1987
Afghanistan	140-180	400-500	500-800	400-800
Iran	400-600	200-400	200-400	200-400
Pakistan	40-50	40-70	140-160	135-160*
Total	580-830	640-970	840-1,360	735-1,360

*This estimate uses yield factor of 14.82 kilograms per hectare, down from a factor of 19.76 used in previous years' estimates. The reduced value reflects Pakistani assessments of the impact of poor weather in the 1986/1987 season. Other U.S. officials believe yields may have been in the 20 kilogram range, which would result in a higher estimate of production.

The 1987 opium poppy harvest in Afghanistan yielded approximately the same quantity of opium as in 1986 (see Figure 17). Afghanistan has no narcotics control program and does not ban opium poppy cultivation.

Iran has antinarcotics laws, but no narcotics control program; the Iranian media, however, repeatedly reported narcotics interdictions by Iranian authorities. In early December 1987, it was reported that about one ton of opium was confiscated. Despite Iranian Government statements to the contrary, U.S. officials believe that 200 to 400 metric tons of opium were produced in 1987.

In 1987, Pakistan continued its efforts to reduce the illicit opium harvest by introducing aerial spraying. Despite increased enforcement effort and adverse weather conditions in the growing areas, the 1987 opium production figure remained at about the 1986 level (see Figure 17). This result may be due to an increased domestic demand which probably caused an increase in the cultivation area. The Government of Pakistan, however, announced that it intends to achieve zero opium production by 1990.

The Indian Government reemphasized its commitment to controlling the legitimate opium industry. There is believed to be disagreement, however, among government officials about the amount of diversion which admittedly is occurring. Diversion figures range from 5 to 10 percent of the total production. In order to remain a licensed opium producer, a farmer must meet a minimum yield requirement set by the Indian Government. The lower the yield requirement the greater the chance that a farmer can overproduce and sell some opium illicitly. Significantly reduced yield requirements in 1987 due to unfavorable weather conditions in the licensed growing areas, together with reports of opium poppy cultivation in nontraditional growing areas, might indicate an overall increase in the availability of illicit opium.

Opium poppy cultivation in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley continued on an estimated 4,000 hectares or more in 1987.

Consumption: The number of heroin addicts in Pakistan grew from virtually zero in 1980 to at least 300,000 in 1985, according to the Pakistan Narcotics Control Board. The heroin addict population continued to increase in 1986, reaching an estimated 660,000. The number of opium addicts seems to have decreased slightly to

about 260,000. Awareness of and attention to the heroin problem by the public, the media, and the Government of Pakistan continued to increase in 1987 and demand reduction efforts were broadened. Treatment facilities, however, remained inadequate. Efforts continued to train private physicians and social workers in drug abuse treatment, and a drug orientation curriculum for use in schools has been developed.

Although India has a large opium-using population, estimated at 3 to 5 million, heroin addiction, nearly unheard of only a few years ago, has been increasing. Authorities reportedly estimate a heroin user population of approximately 250,000 to 700,000.

Drug use data for Iran and Afghanistan are difficult to obtain. In the past, Iran had an estimated 100,000 heroin addicts, and about 500,000 opium users. In Afghanistan, there were believed to be 100,000 to 125,000 chronic opium users and a small but growing number of heroin smokers.

While opium use in Egypt was significant in 1985 and 1986, heroin use, considered insignificant before 1984, increased sharply in 1985 and remained at high levels in 1987.

Laboratories/Refineries: Heroin laboratories in Pakistan remained concentrated in the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), primarily the Khyber Agency. In 1985, six functioning refineries were seized by law enforcement officials; another 23 laboratories in the Khyber Agency, NWFP, were surrendered under governmental pressure. While the 1985 removals were significant, the number of laboratories probably increased in 1986 because the Governor of the NWFP and the Political Agent of the Khyber Agency were unwilling to use force against the laboratory operators. In 1987, preliminary figures indicated that 21 heroin laboratories were surrendered to government officials. No change in the surrender policy, which is not considered to be as effective as it could be, is expected in the near future.

Heroin laboratories also were located in Afghanistan and Iran. The principal area of laboratory activity in Afghanistan was located in Nangarhar Province, which adjoins Pakistan's NWFP. In the past, lesser concentrations were found in Helmand Province in the south and near the Iranian border in the southwest. Heroin refined in these laboratories was usually exported. Iranian

opiate refineries reportedly were active in Kurdistan near the Turkish border, as well as in or around the cities of Tabriz and Zahedan.

During 1987, clandestine heroin conversion continued on a moderate scale within India, although no heroin laboratories were seized. There was, however, the reported seizure of a morphine laboratory. Most of the refineries used raw opium gum or morphine base obtained in India for production into finished heroin. Heroin base for other Indian laboratories came from Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It is likely that refineries in the Bekaa Valley and in northwestern Lebanon processed locally produced opium as well as opiates from Southwest Asia. A large portion of this heroin was destined for the United States.

In 1987, three laboratories were detected and destroyed in Turkey by police officials, revealing heroin refining activities in that country. Generally, Turkish heroin laboratories, so-called kitchen laboratories, are primitive and portable and often are set up to produce no more heroin than is required for a single transaction.